

Applicant Name Montana Tech of the University of Montana
Project Name Butte Native Plant Propagation

Project Abstract

Butte's natural ecosystem has been negatively impacted from 130 years of mining and smelting activities. Five-hundred individual waste rock and tailings dumps occur where a native subalpine vegetation community once flourished. Many dumps were reclaimed with revegetated soil caps of grasses and alfalfa providing temporary soil stability. The native flora of the Butte Hill and much of Summit Valley is represented by small remnant patches which produce an insufficient seed source to propagate and expand into the rest of the landscape which is thinly vegetated with weedy species.

The goal of this project is to provide plants to reestablish native species diversity into open spaces of Butte to produce a sustainable and aesthetically pleasing ecosystem. The goal will be accomplished by constructing a greenhouse nursery and hardening facility to propagate native plant material collected on the Butte Hill, in Summit Valley. Previously identified plant species (identified in a pilot project conducted by Butte-Silver Bow [BSB] Planning Department, and a project conducted by K. Douglass and volunteers from the Native Plant Society) will be used. The variety of plant species will continue to increase through collection of local native plant species.

The Biology Department of Montana Tech of the University of Montana will be responsible for and supervise construction of the facility and the project. Faculty, staff, and students will manage the greenhouse, collect native plant seeds and vegetative material for propagation, conduct experimental propagation techniques, prepare the plants for distribution and planting, and monitor success of the plantings in the field. BSB staff will participate in propagation of plant material.

The facility will be located at Montana Tech. The plants produced will be available for planting on the Butte Hill and surrounding Summit Valley.

The project will take approximately 12 months to complete.